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ABSTRACT

This publication summarizes a lengthy two-volume report that describes a study of six technical assistance groups (TAGS) that provide extended face-to-face help to teachers, administrators, parents, and/or students involved in attempts to improve local schools. The six groups chosen for study include AFRAM Associates, the Center for New Schools, Creative Teaching Workshop/Experiential Systems, Inc., the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities, the Rural Education Program, and United Bronx Parents. This summary report first presents an overview of the study, briefly summarizes major case study findings for each of the TAGs, and describes the comparative analysis of the six TAGs. In addition, it briefly examines the nature of educational change and discusses the study's implications for researchers, educational policy-makers, and those engaged in providing technical assistance to school groups. (Author/JG)

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FINAL REPORT
SUMMARY

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SUMMARY
ASSISTANCE STRATEGIES OF SIX GROUPS THAT FACILITATE EDUCATIONAL CHANGE AT THE SCHOOL/COMMUNITY LEVEL

Center for New Schools*
59 East Van Buren, Suite 1800
Chicago, Illinois 60605

February 15, 1977

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SUMMARY

Overview

The research report summarized here describes the results of a study of six assistance groups who provide extended face-to-face help to teachers, administrators, parents, and/or students involved in attempts to change specific local schools. We call these helping groups technical assistance groups (TAGs) in this study, and we refer to persons or groups at the local level who are provided with such assistance as Receivers of Technical Assistance (RTAs).

The six groups chosen for study from a set of 25 groups who were seriously interested in participating are as follows:

1. AFRAM Associates (AFRAM). A Harlem-based group that has provided assistance to parents at eight Follow-Through Program sites, in four states and Washington, D.C. AFRAM attempts to help parents become full partners in their children's education in terms of decision-making and day-to-day involvement in schools.

2. Center for New Schools (CNS). A group that has attempted a variety of assistance strategies for changing urban schools, with an emphasis on using qualitative research studies of successful change efforts as a source of information for assistance.

3. Creative Teaching Workshop/Experiential Systems, Inc. (CTW). An advisory group working with teachers and principals in several New York public schools with a focus on using concepts and techniques of direct experiential learning with both children and adults.

4. Institute for the Development of Educational Activities, Inc. (/I/D/E/A/). A group of educators who have developed Individually Guided Education (IGE). IGE is an approach to individualizing student learning programs that entails a changed approach to planning and carrying out instruction, on-going staff development,

and social reorganization of the teaching staff. Having developed the change strategy and related materials, /I/D/E/A/ staff have trained staff from Intermediate Agencies such as state departments of education to provide on-going assistance for carrying out the IGE program in over 1200 schools.

5. Rural Education Program (REP). A group developing a strategy for assisting rural schools and communities to carry out a systematic problem-solving process to deal with priority local school problems. REP is currently field-testing their approach through training and supporting local facilitators working in two rural school districts and is developing training and support mechanisms within state and intermediate education agencies to assist the change process at the local level.

6. United Bronx Parents (UBP). A group of parent activists in the South Bronx section of New York City who assist local parent groups in the area to increase their influence in local schools through training, acting as advocates for individual students, and community organizing.

The study focuses on the history of each group, their current methods of internal functioning, their philosophy of change and of their role in the change process, an analysis of two assistance projects carried out by each group, an analysis of the patterns of assistance work (including its effectiveness under varying conditions), and some issues related to future development. These topics are first analyzed in individual case studies of each group and then considered in a cross-site analysis of similarities and differences among the groups.

Study Rationale

Large-scale support for attempts to improve schools during the sixties (including special program funding from federal

and state sources and major efforts to develop improved education products and techniques through the research, development, and dissemination paradigm) failed to produce significant change in the functioning of schools. A growing body of research suggests the reasons for these failures and at the same time suggests some of the principles on which a more adequate approach to change might be based:

1. The school community is a social system stabilized by strong social forces that can be analyzed using such concepts as roles, norms, functional subsystems, routines, decision rules, and standard operating procedures. Educational change inevitably entails altering some aspects of the school community as a social system.[1]

2. Schools and school communities are loosely-coupled organizations, and this fact makes change more difficult.[2]

3. Schools have multiple unclear goals and lack an established methodology for reaching these goals. Thus, the incentives for school staff to change are weak.[3]

4. The school exists in an interdependent relationship with other systems, including the community it serves and the larger school system. Those who have a significant interest in the functioning of a school constitute the school's "organizational coalition." A promising strategy for change is to shift the configuration of the school's organizational coalition by giving a larger role to parents.[4]

5. Personal contact and influence is a key variable in the process of adopting and implementing innovations. There is some evidence that planned face-to-face assistance in education and other fields is helpful in the process of change.[5]

6. Given the fact that most educational innovations entail changes in the school as a social system and that those formally adopting the innovation are often not involved in carrying it out, the process of implementing educational innovations is vital.[6]

7. One characteristic of the process of adoption and implementation that is critical is the development or modification of innovations in light of locally perceived needs. Others include providing specific training and support for the development of new roles, ongoing training and technical assistance providing concrete help in carrying out the innovation, and the local development of materials. Additional specific features of successful implementation can be gleaned from various research efforts focused on this issue.

For a period of two years preceding the initiation of this study, we had been collecting information about the functioning and change efforts of groups providing long-term face-to-face assistance to specific school communities in an effort to facilitate local change. These groups seemed particularly promising as a focus for study since they seemed to be carrying out change strategies consistent with the principles for effective change just summarized. They included groups that saw themselves as part of a variety of change traditions, including organizational development, alternative schools, open and experiential education, individualized instruction, community and parent organizing, formative evaluation and applied research, bilingual education, and child advocacy. Their commonality lay in their commitment to provide long-term face-to-face assistance at the local "school community" level as the core of a change process. On-site visits to several such groups, plus a review of the research studies available about the work of a few of them, suggested that many were following the types of principles listed above and were, in

fact, facilitating the changes in the social structure and process of school that research was indicating as critical in a successful change process. Thus, we decided to initiate a study of several such groups for three reasons:

1. We saw technical assistance as a promising avenue for bringing about locally-based educational change consistent with current knowledge about the change process.

2. We saw TAG groups who had been in existence for a number of years as a repository of valuable information about the dynamics of educational change.

3. Given the potential we saw in the efforts of many TAGs, we wished to make a contribution to strengthening their operation.

Study Methods

Given the limited information available about TAGs, we decided that the most productive research strategy to pursue was one that employed qualitative methods and was based on the development of a "grounded theory" of TAG functioning.[8] We were convinced that before broad assessment could be made of the effectiveness of TAGs (both in comparison with each other and in comparison with other change methods), the internal processes of such groups and their processes of providing assistance should be carefully analyzed.

Thus, we saw the emphases of the study at its inception as follows:

1. The study of the internal functioning of the individual TAGs.

2. The study of the processes by which individual TAGs provide assistance to RTAs.

3. The study of techniques and circumstances that lead to greater or lesser effectiveness in particular circumstances. Our emphasis was on short-term effectiveness of strategies in specific settings, not on broad generalizations about effectiveness of one TAG compared with another.

4. The comparison of similarities and differences between the TAGs in the areas of study focus.

We conducted a wide-ranging telephone search for potential participants, asked them to send us information about their programs, and explained the obligations of participating in the study to them. Ultimately, we chose the six participating groups from about 25 who completed a detailed questionnaire about their activities and expressed interest in participation. We sought a diversity of participating groups in terms of the specific focus or topic of their assistance, the role group(s) primarily served, types of assistance methods employed, types of communities served, make-up of the staff, and the role of research and analysis in their work.

The major steps in the research process were the following:

1. The development of an initial research framework consisting of a set of basic concepts that we have found consistently useful in past attempts to understand the dynamics of school community change, such as role, functional subsystem, behavior setting, norm, social control, communication medium, communication barrier, etc.

2. The development of a research plan based on understanding the internal functioning of TAG, school, community, community group and other significant environmental

entities and on understanding the interfaces of all of these entities.

3. The completion of a specific contractual agreement for study participation with the groups we asked to participate.

4. A conference to review the study plan and share ideas, with two representatives attending from each TAG.

5. An initial visit by two field workers to each TAG for one to two weeks, with an emphasis on understanding internal TAG functioning. This visit was followed by the refinement of the study emphases.

6. A second site visit of about three weeks to each TAG, with an emphasis on studying two on-going assistance projects of the TAG.

7. The formulation of a common set of questions for the analysis of each TAG.

8. The development of sets of propositions about patterns observed in the functioning of each TAG which were responsive to the questions.

9. The completion of a case study draft for each TAG.

10. A second conference to review the drafts and to review ideas about the analysis of similarities and differences between groups.

11. The development of a set of questions for cross-site analysis.

12. The development of cross-site analysis propositions responsive to the questions and the preparation of a draft of the cross-site analysis.

13. Review of the cross-site analysis by participating TAGs and final revision of the case studies and the cross-site analysis.

The data collection process emphasized informal interviewing and participant observation focused around a set of specific concerns that we kept trying to sharpen as the study proceeded. A major

problem encountered in the study was a time-consuming and abortive attempt to use a computer-based system for sorting data related to key topics under study.

The Six Case Studies

The individual case studies will be of great value to persons actively engaged in particular types of change efforts (e.g. parent organizing, teachers advisories) and to persons studying such efforts. They also contain an enormous amount of specific information and analysis generally useful for understanding the process of face-to-face assistance. We cannot possibly summarize even the major points of each case study; we offer a few important points discussed in each one as examples of the types of specific topics that are dealt with:

1. Creative Teaching Workshop

   --CTW has been successful in using concrete learning experiences with teachers and principals as a means for helping them understand their own learning styles.

   --CTW has been instrumental in fundamentally changing the functioning of one New York City public school, so that typical classroom activity is consistent with their notions of experiential education.

   --CTW has faced recurring internal problems in forming a group of creative people into a viable organization.

2. /I/D/E/A/

   --/I/D/E/A/ has developed a powerful training format for facilitators who work directly with schools, which includes the introduction of substantive information about their change strategy (Individually Guided Education), group process techniques, and direct experience in applying the IGE program in teaching children.

--IGE relies heavily on well-prepared written and audio-visual materials to supplement their direct assistance, and this materials system consists primarily of short booklets and filmstrips that can be used to address specific RTA needs or concerns at appropriate times.

--/I/D/E/A/ has been successful in involving 1200 schools in the IGE program and in convincing about 100 Intermediate Agencies (e.g. state departments of education) to support facilitators who assist schools in carrying out IGE.

--A major determinant of the degree of IGE implementation is the extent to which the principal of the school is already predisposed toward the IGE philosophy ("IGE is everything I always believed; it put it all together for me.")

3. United Bronx Parents

--United Bronx Parents is notable for the disciplined approach they have developed to the refinement of a change strategy while serving multiple community needs in a difficult urban setting. Evidence of this discipline is reflected in their insistence on the systematic planning and post mortum analysis of almost all group activities and the willingness of staff to shift from one internal project to another or from program to clerical jobs as funding dictates.

--UBP is noted for its sophisticated analysis of the structure of the school system and its carefully focused use of conflict tactics against individuals who oppose UBP goals.

--UBP uses case advocacy for suspended students and systematic parent training that involves active analysis of local schools as major vehicles for organizing parents.

--Influence on the learning programs of local schools is to this point limited to specific projects in individual schools, and one issue the organization faces is how to become involved more substantially in such issues without losing its essential character as a group of "parents helping parents."

4. AFRAM Associates/Harlem

--AFRAM employs powerful moral arguments centered around love of one's children and the integrity of the family to stimulate parents to take an active role in school decision-making.

--AFRAM's experience illustrates some of the difficulties of providing assistance to widely dispersed geographical sites. To overcome these geographical barriers, AFRAM places constant emphasis on the need for local people to take control of their own situation and act on their own initiative and also emphasizes sharing among the "AFRAM family" through a communications network and an annual family conference.

--AFRAM has taken a principled position against traditional evaluation procedures, which they regard as mechanisms for social control of poor people, although they support documentation and analysis of their work that is consistent with the assumption that families have the right to be full partners in the education of their children.

5. Rural Education Program

--REP's basic belief is that they must institutionalize a new problem-solving and decision-making process for rural education that involves both school and community. They strongly resist providing substantive solutions to problems.

--REP has developed and tested an intricate process for carrying out systematic problem-solving in rural communities, for training facilitators for this process, and for developing supportive mechanisms at the intermediate school district and state levels to support the change process at the local level.

--Some important issues concerning the REP change process include the ways in which participants can experience enough specific substantive accomplishments to sustain their involvement in the process and whether established school boards and school officials will accept community input into decision-making as a new format for educational decision-making rather than as a temporary advisory process.

6. Center for New Schools

-- One of CNS's major accomplishments has been the successful establishment of an alternative high school without walls in Chicago whose distinctive character has in many ways persisted beyond their withdrawal from active assistance to the school.

-- CNS is notable for its attempt to use applied research analysis of successful change efforts as a basis for assisting other change efforts. Extensive field-testing of the entire applied research-assistance cycle has not yet been completed.

-- CNS is notable for the diversity of its staff in terms of racial and ethnic background as well as prior training. A major issue confronting the organization is whether a strategy for change can be systematically developed and implemented by this diverse group or whether this should be a goal of the organization.

Once again, these comments are in no sense a summary of important points in the case studies. They are merely designed to give the reader some sense of the specific topics the case studies address.

Comparative Analysis of the Six TAGs

The comparative analysis of the six TAGs yielded some extremely useful similarities and differences between groups. Naturally, much is lost in the attempt to summarize these comparisons. Below, we briefly describe some key similarities we observed in comparing the technical assistance groups and their efforts to help local school communities that are associated with effective TAG functioning:

1. Critical Role of the Group's Founding. The founding of the technical assistance group is the most critical single influence in shaping subsequent internal activities and patterns of assistance. The typical pattern of TAG formation is one

in which a strong leader (or small leadership group) draws on a tradition of change (e.g. community control, open education, Puerto Rican nationalism) to propose a strategy of direct assistance to improve the schools. This strategy includes an analysis of what is deficient in current education, how things could be better, what role groups should receive assistance to make these improvements, what subsystems of the school community should be priorities for the change effort, and what the role should be of a facilitator who works directly to assist change. These initial assumptions become the basis for a pattern of subsequent TAG development that makes certain lines of activity seem self-evident.

2. The Interdependence of Internal TAG Functioning and the Delivery of Assistance. Following their early formative process, effective TAGs focus on four interdependent areas of activity: establishing and maintaining effective TAG internal management, obtaining and maintaining funds, developing assistance strategies, and carrying out specific assistance efforts. The case studies and the comparative analysis provide numerous examples of the close interdependence of these four areas of activity and the ways in which internal activity consistently affects the delivery of technical assistance.

3. The Crucial Role of Strong Leadership. The leader acts as an "entrepreneur," drawing together the necessary staff, funding, and initial RTAs necessary for starting and sustaining the

organization. Leaders vary widely in their styles, but they have a common characteristic of being willing to project a clear direction and set clear limits. They are viewed, ideally, as the legitimate interpreters of the TAG's strategy, always acting in the best interests of the goals the TAG espouses.

4. Complexity and Interdependence of the TAG. The functioning of a TAG requires a high degree of interdependence among staff members in performing a variety of complex tasks whose procedures are almost all in the process of development, rather than being well worked out. Further, TAGs exist in an uncertain environment where the pressing and often conflicting demands of multiple constituencies have to be satisfied. Thus, the formation of a TAG thrusts on leadership and staff a set of complex managerial tasks, even though their primary experience may have previously been in direct action or program development. Adjustment to these complex managerial problems is a key determinant of the viability of the organization.

5. Mutual Adaptation as a Key to TAG Development. We have found the notion of "mutual adaptation" consistently useful in analyzing both the internal functioning of TAGs and the process of assistance.[9] However, the TAG that is effective is not merely one that is "flexible"; on the contrary, adjustments are made gradually and after careful analysis of experience.

6. Staff Selection and Socialization. A key ingredient in successful TAG functioning is the effective selection and socialization of staff. Effective staff selection seems generally to

entail identifying persons who (1) accept the basic philosophical assumptions of the TAG and (2) have had relevant experience in carrying them out. Once staff are selected, effective TAGs consciously socialize new members into the TAG's method of doing things, through direct supervised experience in the TAG's work, analysis of that experience, planned training sessions, and supportive written materials. In effective TAGs, the staff socialization process merges with on-going mechanisms for social control, including the monitoring of work. The effective TAG constantly gives feedback that one is or is not living up to the TAG's ideology and uses inclusion in the TAG as a social group as a major mechanism for internal control. An attempt to summarize these mechanisms briefly may make them sound heavy-handed, but in the effectively functioning TAG, the spirit is one of making a positive contribution to a competent team, whose basic values one shares.

7. Decision-Making. One can usually distinguish three levels of program staff in a TAG: top leadership, a "middle management" group whose authority is generally unclear, and those program staff members who do not have supervisory responsibility and are often the persons acting as facilitators of the assistance process. The development of mechanisms for resolving the claims of each group for a role in decision-making is a key to effective TAG functioning. These complex issues are discussed in more detail in the report itself.

8. Obtaining and Maintaining Funds. Since funding for assistance efforts is characteristically uncertain, much organizational energy goes into searching for funds, reconciling TAG work with the priorities of funders who only partly share the TAG's perspective, writing proposals and reports for funders, and maintaining relationships with them. Those TAGs most effective in fund-raising approach the task as an on-going necessity. Critical to successful fund-raising and to a number of other internal TAG activities is the process of building a resource network that can be called on to provide information on funding, legitimation and political support, advice and criticism of TAG work, etc.

A major issue related to funding is the time frame for which funding can be obtained to develop an assistance strategy. It appears that the full development of a TAG strategy with related techniques and materials takes about five to seven years, falling into two stages. In the first, the TAG tries out elements of its approach and analyzes these experiences, which results in a mixed history of success and failure and also in a sense of how they would carry out their strategy ideally. The second period involves refinement of this strategy, again through a process of assistance and analysis. This second period can also be a time when the TAG perfects methods for training other groups to become facilitators of the strategy. However, it is

difficult to obtain funding for such a sustained period of development. Thus, just when a TAG is gaining some closure on the elements of an effective strategy, they are often forced by the needs of funding to move into a new field of activity.

9. Strains of Expansion and Geographical Dispersion. A program staff of about seven members located in one place seems optimal in allowing decision-making, problem-solving, communication, and monitoring of work to occur through face-to-face discussion and without elaborate managerial procedures. If a TAG is funded to carry out a new project and must expand toward a staff of 15-20 members, the management procedures needed to operate such an organization shift qualitatively, raising simultaneous problems of developing a new program, training new staff, and initiating a new style of internal organization. Expansion is often accompanied by the need to serve geographically dispersed sites, raising another set of complicated issues of staff socialization, communication, and monitoring of work.

10. Strategy Development and the Analysis-Assistance Cycle. One important indicator of the effectiveness of a TAG group is a movement over time toward the development of a technical assistance strategy that has increasing coherence, is stated concretely enough to have implications for action in specific situations, and is generally acted on by TAG staff. Absolutely essential to the process of strategy development is

long-term direct involvement in attempts to assist specific school communities. Without such involvement in the day-to-day realities of local school communities, strategies for change will be of limited effectiveness. However, immersion in the realities of local school communities is in itself insufficient to develop an effective technical assistance strategy. Given the immediate demands on the time of TAC staff members, effective TAGs must internalize regular mechanisms for the analysis of their assistance efforts. Evidence of a regular cycle of analysis and assistance is a strong predictor of TAG effectiveness.

11. The Social Systems Perspective/Effective Mapping. The TAGs we studied have developed an increasingly sophisticated analysis of the nature of all major role groups and subsystems in the school community and its environment and are increasingly able to predict how their action will affect each entity within this complex system. Another way of stating this point is that effective TAGs become increasingly sophisticated at "mapping" the social systems they are trying to change.

12. Materials Development. Despite the assumption of the groups under study that face-to-face assistance is the most effective way to bring about change, we consistently found that well-prepared written and audio-visual materials were extremely important tools in the assistance process. They served to communicate key concepts of the TAG's approach in a clear and con-

sistent way, to provide detailed information on topics of special interest to RTAs at different points in the change process, and to aid the process of orienting the TAG's own staff. Effective materials systems consist of a number of individual short handouts, booklets, filmstrips, etc.--each of which can be used to address an immediate information need.

13. The TAG's Relationship with the RTA on the Internal-External Dimension. The TAG may be an integral part of the RTA or may be an external professional organization a thousand miles away. We did not find that an internal or external relationship to the RTA was a clear predictor of effectiveness. Rather we found that TAGs were successful to the extent that they adapted to the relative strengths and weaknesses of their position on the internal-external dimension in many ways explained in the report.

14. The Need for Focused Assistance. One possible model for providing assistance is for the TAG to raise funds to support a number of facilitators who are then "turned loose" to aid local schools and communities. This model has not worked well, and the groups under study have developed approaches to providing assistance that emphasize the importance of the collective effort to refine facilitator strategies, definite limits on the range of activities in which facilitators can become involved, and the development of a clear focus of facilitator effort on those aspects of school community functioning viewed by the TAG as

priorities for change. Given the perceived need for focused and coordinated facilitator efforts, we found that TAG effectiveness was associated with various strategies for avoiding facilitator isolation, including the teaming of facilitators to work on the same site, regular supervison, and regular joint analysis of assistance work involving facilitators and other TAG members.

15. Selecting Facilitators. Effective facilitators tend to be those who accept the basic philosophical assumptions and the strategies of the TAG and have personal characteristics, training, and experience that both serve to build their credibility with RTAs and prepare the facilitators to carry out the specific tasks envisioned for their role by the TAG.

16. The Entry and Relationship-Building Process. Since patterns set in initial contacts are very difficult to change, effective TAGs are highly conscious in planning the entry process. They attempt to develop an accurate "map" of the school community and its environment. They also carefully plan in what contexts and about what topics they hope to interact with RTAs. Three main tasks are accomplished by effective TAGs during the entry process: (1) they establish credibility with RTAs, (2) they develop a set of mutual obligations and limits in the TAG-RTA relationship, and (3) they realistically assess whether the TAG's capabilities match with the needs and characteristics of the school community.

17. Specific Techniques of Assistance. We have identified five major types of techniques that are used to assist RTAs. These

include (1) structured experiences (e.g. workshops), over-the-shoulder assistance (e.g. advice as part of a parent strategy session), (3) modeling (e.g. working directly with a student in using a new reading technique), (4) provision of materials (e.g. giving teachers interested in improving staff meetings a booklet on group process), and (5) independent intervention (e.g. writing a proposal for a community group). Each of these techniques has characteristic strengths and weaknesses, analyzed in the report. Given these complementary strengths and weaknesses, it appears that effective TAG assistance results from the thoughtful combination of the first four techniques (structured experiences, over-the-shoulder assistance, modeling, and provision of materials). Effective TAGs minimize independent intervention on behalf of the RTA because it tends to create dependency.

18. Mutual Adaptation between the TAG and Local Setting. TAG strategies appear to be most effective when they provide a coherent underlying philosophy and guidelines for action in specific situations, but allow for flexibility to meet local conditions. Such flexibility includes the need to adapt to local school community culture, to constraints of local situations (e.g. resource constraints), and to the crises (such as budget crises and massive teacher transfers) that have become almost commonplace in many school systems.

19. Encouraging Independent Initiative. A central and constant concern for experienced TAGs is a desire to carry out assistance in such a way that they encourage independent initiative on the part

of the RTAs and discourage dependency. This priority is reflected in the attempt to build working agrements with RTAs that require clear RTA obligations, constant emphasis that the TAG can only be of limited help and the RTAs must do things for themselves, the effort to minimize situations in which the TAG does things for people, and a design for assistance that entails the constant transfer of skills and knowledge to RTAs.

20. Changes that Last--Changes in Social Structure and Process. Each of the six TAGs studied has made concerted attempts to promote the longer term incorporation of the changes they have helped initiate in the school community. The following TAG activities seem associated with the persistence of changes stimulated by the TAG beyond the withdrawal of services:

1. TAGs become increasingly sophisticated in mapping the school community and its environment, in predicting the effects of actions in one part of the system on another, and in acting on this analysis. They are particularly anxious, for example, to build up a critical mass of teachers or parents who adopt their approach and to avoid short-term actions that will, in the longer term, cut them off from larger constituencies they hope to win over. They increasingly recognize the critical role of the school principal in supporting or blocking desired changes and develop strategies for dealing with her. If the TAG uses conflict tactics, they target them carefully, considering what goals they hope to achieve through a specific conflict and the likely reactions of all elements of the school community to the conflict.

2. The TAG focuses on central rather than periperal social processes and structures in the school community.

3. The TAG attempts to develop supports for changes they espouse in significant parts of the school community's environment, including commitment or at least tolerance among higher level administrators. Such supports can also include the development of a permanent network of facilitators who can aid local change after the services of the TAG are withdrawn.

4. The TAG adopts a constant skill-building and knowledge-transfer orientation in assistance efforts, including the transfer of TAG skills in mapping the environment and in utilizing a cycle of action and analysis.

5. The TAG attempts to develop a new set of attitudes--an ideology or picture of the world--among the RTAs. The TAG strongly projects an initial set of beliefs, attempts to get RTAs to internalize a standard for following through on these beliefs, seeks to make RTAs aware on a cognitive level that they are learning new skills and solving problems, and often seeks to build the feeling that RTAs are part of a broader educational or social movement.

21. Critical Activities as a Way to Analyze TAG Functioning. We believe that a profitable way to analyze the characteristics of technical assistance efforts that are briefly summarized here is through the specification of an initial list of "critical activities" for TAG functioning. In the study of TAGs, critical activities are those activities carried out by a TAG that are, based on our data, most important in establishing and maintaining the TAG as a viable organization and in enabling them to provide appropriate technical assistance services to RTAs. The list of critical activities we have developed in this study is appended to the summary.

The Nature of Educational Change

In analyzing change efforts as part of this study, we have tentatively identified several patterns in the process of educational change:

1. Changes in Social Structure and Process as a Criterion for Change. We conclude that the most useful criterion for the effectiveness of educational change efforts is the effectiveness of a given strategy in altering the social structure and process of the school community or its environment in some intended way.

2. The Lack of Ripple Effects. While TAGs generally make claims that they are intervening at a strategic point in the functioning of the school community system and that their particular focus for intervention will lead to wide ripple effects through other aspects of the system, we did not observe such patterns occuring. Our observations suggest that those aspects of school community functioning change that are the focus of highly detailed plans for change and a high percentage of facilitator effort. If there is anything like a strategic point in the school community system that consistently influences the effectiveness of a wide variety of change strategies, it is the principal, who has a great deal of ability to block change and some ability to initiate it.

3. Limits of Change Strategies Imposed by Characteristics of Situations. We consistently observed limits imposed on change strategies by particular characteristics of local school community settings. These variations undercut the notion that one "best" strategy can be developed. Our observations support the need for the development of a wide variety of strategies to meet varied local conditions.

4. Central Role of Values in Change Efforts. Strongly held value commitments were at the heart of the educational change and technical assistance processes we observed. Local change efforts and those who assist them draw on philosophies or ideologies that allow them to choose from the many possibilities they might pursue with a degree of conviction that seems critical in holding a change

effort together. Education persistently raises value questions that cannot be resolved by appeals to empirical evidence. For example, AFRAM explicitly asks through its work whether the partnership of parents in school decision-making is a fundamental right (as they believe) or a "treatment" that should be evaluated based on its impact on student achievement.

5. The Time Frame Needed for Change. If lasting changes are changes in social structure and process, the time frame for local change generally observed in the study (three to four years) must be anticipated by those either involved in or funding change efforts.

Some Implications for Those Engaged in Providing Technical Assistance

1. We have completed case studies of individual TAGs with widely differing philosophies of educational change because we have found almost no such case studies in existence. We see the individual case studies as being of particular use to persons engaging in or planning to engage in TAG activities employing approaches similar to particular groups studied (e.g. organizing parents, advising teachers or principals). This is one reason why we have included substantial information about internal TAG functioning.

2. The development of critical activities in the comparative analysis of TAGs is also intended to be of particular use to those involved in technical assistance, since it organizes information from the study around activities that TAGs actually carry out and

can bring under conscious planning and control. We are not suggesting that the list of critical activities we have generated is complete or final--it is an initial list in need of refinement. However, because we have found common patterns of activity associated with effective TAG functioning in groups as diverse as the six TAGs under study, we have some confidence that this list will be a useful stimulus for other TAGs to analyze their patterns of functioning.

Implications for Research

1. We have attempted to conduct an exploratory study based on a "grounded theory" approach that touches on a large number of topics concerning the internal and external functioning of TAGs. We intend that through identifying important areas of TAG functioning (such as those summarized earlier), we can provide the basis for subsequent research that will delve deeper into these areas. For example, regular processes for analyzing direct experience in providing assistance have proved critical to the development of coherent TAG strategies. Much more detailed information about the nature of such processes and the ways they are institutionalized within TAGs is an important area for future research.

2. Our study suggests a direction for the future assessment of the impact of TAG efforts through the measurement of changes in the social structure and process of school communities, although we wish to guard against premature summative evaluation of technical assistance as a change strategy before it has had sufficient time for

strengthening through formative evaluation and adequate funding support to develop strategies fully.

3. The comparision of our case studies and comparative analysis of TAGs with the research of others currently analyzing educational change from a grounded theory perspective should yield some important general insights concerning educational change processes that can form the basis for more focused subsequent studies.

Implications for Policy Makers

1. Lessons for Deploying Existing Resources. There are already an enormous number of persons in school districts, universities, intermediate school districts, state educational agencies, social service agencies interested in the schools, and independent community organizations who have the responsibility to help local school communities. Thus, the experience of the types of independent groups analyzed in this study can be thought of as a source of invaluable information for the strengthening of enormous existing resources for providing assistance to local school communities.

2. Expanded Support of Technical Assistance as One Plausible Approach to Change. Those technical assistance groups with an effective past record of facilitating local school change (including the types of independent groups we have studied) are pursuing a strategy for change that is consistent with recent research findings about the process of educational change summarized earlier. The patterns of activity and accomplishments of TAGs documented in this study further strengthen the argument for developing and analyzing

the potential of technical assistance as one improtant change strategy. Thus, it would seem that (1) increased support for a variety of assistance strategies for periods sufficent to allow them to develop their full potential and (2) continued study of TAG processes of assistance and of their impact is an important direction to pursue in a longer-range effort to improve educational practice. If existing TAGs who have made major strides toward developing change strategies are given such opportunities, there is a significant future benefit in terms of their becoming a resource to assist the large number of other existing helpers described above.

3. Importance of Developing Varied Strategies Responsive to Local Values and Conditions. The study highlights some key aspects of the process of educational change summarized earlier. These include the key role of values in the change process, the strong influence of local settings on the course of change processes attempted by TAGs, and the lack of widespread ripple effects resulting from intervention in particular subsystems of the school community. The view of the change process that emerges from our analysis would seem to suggest that a variety of approaches to change need to be pursued--that public policy should emphasize the diversity of values and particular local conditions reflected in the American public education system, rather than pursuing the notion that a single scientifically-validated approach will be developed at some future point.

4. Funding Patterns. We argued earlier that current funding practices allow insufficient time frames for technical assistance

strategies to be fully developed and often cut off or divert strategy development at a time when it is beginning to reach its greatest potential for effectiveness and broader application. Thus, we would recommend that those supporting the development of TAG strategies expect to provide them with assistance for a period of five to seven years and develop reasonable criteria for assessing progress along the way based on such considerations as the critical activities appended to this summary.

5. Impact of Funding. We have documented the impact of staff expansion and geographical dispersion of TAG efforts. This analysis should provide a clear basis for thinking about the implications of various plans for supporting or procuring TAG services as they will affect the TAG's internal functioning and external effectiveness. Some possible implications, for example, are that policy-makers may not want to create TAGs with a staff size that heightens the need for complex managerial arrangements or that funders should be prepared to provide assistance to TAGs by providing consultation in dealing with the stresses that TAGs expanding to a given size will experience.

FOOTNOTES

1. See for example, C. Bidwell. "The School as a Formal Organization." I. J. March, Ed., Handbook of Organizations. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965. See also, J.P. Crecine. Report of the Study Group on Organizational Change and Adaptation to the National Institute of Education. Mimeographed.. 1974. See also, M. Fullan, "Overview of the Innovative Process and the User." Interchange, Vol. II, Nos. 2-3, 1-43. See also, P. Berman and M. McLaughlin. Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1974.

2. K. Weick. "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems." Administrative Science Quarterly. 1976, 21, 1-19.

3. J. Pincus. Incentives for Innovation in Public Schools. Rand Document No. P-4946. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1973.

4. Crecine, op. cit., Pincus, op. cit.

5. R. Havelock, et al. Planning for Innovation. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, 1969. See also, E. House. The Politics of Educational Innovation. Berkeley: McCutchan, 1975.

6. Berman and McLaughlin, op. cit.

7. Berman and McLaughlin, op. cit.

8. B. Glaser and A. Strauss. Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago: Aldine, 1967.

9. See Berman and McLaughlin, op. cit. for a discussion of the concept of "mutual adaptation."

ATTACHMENTS

List of Critical Activities

Below is the list of critical activities drawn from the cross-site analysis. They are listed in terms of the five major areas of activity described in the analysis of similarities and differences between TAGs. Some activities are critical in more than one area and thus are listed two or more times.

A. Forming the technical assistance group (FORMATION).

A-1. The TAG draws on existing change movements and traditions consistent with their values as a source of legitimacy, ideas, mutual support, potential staff members, and funding leads. (Also appears as B-1, C-1, and D-1).

A-2. The TAG develops strong organizational leadership that initially organizes resources around the stated strategy. (Also appears as B-2).

A-3. The TAG develops a contact/resource network to provide legitimacy, ideas, mutual support, potential staff members, and funding leads. (Also appears as B-3, C-2, and D-2).

A-4. The founding leaders develop an initial plan for a change strategy. This initial formulation generally includes an analysis of what is deficient in current education, how things could be better, what role groups should receive assistance to make these improvements, what subsystems of the school community are priorities for the change effort, and what the role of the facilitator should be. (Also appears as D-3).

A-5. The leadership obtains sufficient funding for a period of about three years to allow an initial strategy development process to take place. (Also appears as C-3).

A-6. The founding leaders form a core staff that subscribes to the basic assumptions of the strategy formulation and who have had sufficient experience in the settings in which assistance is going to

be provided to develop creative but realistic notions of how the strategy can be refined. (Also appears as B-4 and D-4).

A-7. The TAG successfully develops relationships with an initial set of RTAs, often building on opportunities that result from their identification with a particular educational movement or change tradition.

B. Establishing and maintaining effective internal management (MANAGEMENT).

B-1. The TAG draws on existing change movements and traditions consistent with their values as a source of legitimacy, ideas, mutual support, potential staff members and funding leads. (Also appears as A-1, C-1, and D-1).

B-2. The TAG develops strong organizational leadership that initially organizes resources around the stated strategy. (Also appears as A-2).

B-3. The TAG develops a contact/resource network to provide legitimacy, ideas, mutual support, potential staff members, and funding leads. (Also appears as A-3, C-2, and D-2)

B-4. The founding leaders form a core staff that subscribes to the basic assumptions of the initial strategy formulation and who have had sufficient experience in the settings in which assistance is to be provided to develop creative but realistic notions of how the strategy can be refined. (Also appears as A-6 and D-4).

B-5. The leadership establishes itself as the legitimate interpreter of the nature of the TAG strategy and of the limits it implies, while facilitating the adaptation of the strategy based on the analysis of TAG experience. (Also appears as D-5).

B-6. The leadership creates and maintains internal operating units that function in overall harmony with TAG goals, but develops the skills of key staff through conscious training so that these units operate independent of constant leadership intervention.

B-7. Leadership acquires management skills that correspond with the increasing complexity of the organization, changing from an initial perception of themselves primarily as activists or program developers.

B-8. The leadership adapts its leadership style to the values of TAG staff and RTAs.

B-9. The TAG socializes staff members through a conscious program of direct experience in the TAG's work, analysis of that experience, planned training sessions, and written materials.

B-10. The TAG makes frequent use of project teams consisting of about seven persons and subteams to work on specific tasks consisting of two to three persons.

B-11. The TAG clarifies job responsibilities in writing and/or through clear shared understanding among TAG members.

B-12. The TAG integrates a set of decision-making and problem-solving procedures it has found useful (e.g. brainstorming, active listening) into its on-going operation.

B-13. The TAG seeks funding proportional to the projects they agree to carry out or renegotiates commitments to bring them in line with available funds. (Also appears as C-13).

B-14. The TAG increases administrative support roles or the responsibility of people in those roles to relieve overload on program staff as it expands.

B-15. The TAG carefully examines the impact of multiple roles and responsibilities.

B-16. The TAG establishes regular procedures for supervision and monitoring of work.

B-17. The TAG regularizes personnel policies and procedures.

B-18. The TAG specifies more precisely what

"participation in decision-making" means by specifying who participates in what kinds of internal decisions.

B-19. The TAG distinguishes those tasks for which close intercoordination of teams and projects is desirable and should be encouraged by frequent communication, coordination, and role overlap from those tasks that can be performed with less interdependence by specialists.

B-20. The TAG carefully analyzes the question of TAG size and seeks to attain or maintain a size most appropriate for achieving its purposes.

B-21. The TAG develops functional procedures for allocating decision-making responsibility to the three levels of program staff within the organization: top leadership, middle level leadership, and other program staff.

B-22. The TAG employs mechanisms for consulting staff members about important decisions that affect their work.

B-23. The TAG exercises social control through feedback that a person is or is not adhering to the group's ideology, through including people in the TAG as a social group (the TAG family), through the prestige of being associated with the group, and through other mechnaisms appropriate for the group.

B-24. The TAG perfects a set of communication mechanisms appropriate to the group, capitalizing on the strengths and minimizing the weaknesses of the mechansism chosen. The TAG relies heavily on face-to-face effective communications.

B-25. The TAG adjusts communication mechanisms appropriately as it increases in size.

B-26. The TAG develops regular mechanisms for communicating with geographically dispersed sites, including the effective use of the telephone, written communications, and on-site visits.

B-27. The TAG regularizes day-to-day clerical and administrative activities.

B-28. The TAG develops a high quality of specialized technical capabilities (either on staff or through subcontracts) in such areas as fiscal control, media, and writing.

C. Obtaining and maintaining funds (FUNDING)

C-1. The TAG draws on existing change movements and traditions consistent with their values as a source of legitimacy, ideas, mutual support, potential staff members, and funding leads. (Also appears as A-1, B-1 and D-1).

C-2. The TAG develops a contact/resource network to provide legitimacy, ideas, mutual support, potential staff members, and funding leads.

C-3. The leadership obtains sufficient funding for a period of about three years to allow an initial strategy development process to take place. (Also appears as A-5).

C-4. The TAG devotes regular energy to the analysis of funding possibilities and to cultivating relationships with funders.

C-5. The TAG convinces funders that their assistance work is appropriate for support under their funding categories.

C-6. The TAG develops technical proposal and report-writing skills.

C-7. The TAG includes realistic time-tables and specific realistic objectives in funding proposals.

C-8. The TAG plans the ends of funding cycles to coincide with natural benchmarks in the process of the TAG's work.

C-9. The TAG presses for long-term rather than short-term funding.

C-10. The TAG minimizes the effects of funder demands on TAG time and energy.

C-11. The TAG documents its work to establish what services were delivered and what effects they had.

C-12. The TAG obtains funding for an additional period of about three years in which to field test and modify an initial detailed formulation of the strategy.

C-13. The TAG seeks funding proportional to the projects they agree to carry out or renegotiates commitments to bring them in line with available funds. (Also appears as B-13)

D. Developing assistance strategies (STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT).

D-1. The TAG draws on existing change movements and traditions consistent with their values as a source of legitimacy, ideas, mutual support, potential staff members, and funding leads. (Also appears as A-1, B-1, and C-1).

D-2. The TAG develops a contact-resource network to provide legitimacy, ideas, mutual support, potential staff members, and funding leads.

D-3. The Founding leaders develop an initial plan for a change strategy. This initial formulation generally includes an analysis of what is deficient in current education, how things could be better, what role groups should receive effective assistance to make these improvements, what subsystems of the school community are priorities for the change effort, and what the role of the facilitator should be. (Also appears as A-4).

D-4. The Founding leaders form a core staff that subscribes to the basic assumptions of the initial strategy formulation and who have had sufficient experience in the settings in which assistance is going to be provided to develop creative but realistic notions of how the strategy can be refined. (Also appears as A-6 and and B-4).

D-5. The leadership establishes itself as the legitimate interpreter of the nature of the

TAG strategy and of the limits it implies, while facilitating the adaptation of the strategy based on the analysis of TAG experience. (Also appears as B-5).

D-6. The TAG carries out roughly a three year period of intensive assistance to RTAs, coupled with the regular analysis of these assistance efforts.

D-7. After an initial period of about three years, the TAG specifies a consciously-shared strategy whose implications for facilitator action in specific situations are clearly understood and consistently acted on by the TAG staff.

D-8. The TAG carries out an additional period of assistance of about three years in which they field test and modify the initial detailed formulation of the strategy.

D-9. The TAG develops and deepens an analysis of the school community as a social system whose interdependent social structures and processes must be understood to carry out their change strategy.

D-10. The TAG develops regularized mechanisms for analysis of their direct assistance activities.

D-11. The TAG teams its facilitators and/or develops other effective mechanisms for information-sharing and joint analysis that avoid the danger of facilitator isolation.

D-12. The TAG develops a clear language and method of communication for key terms and concepts that is understood by RTA's.

D-13. The TAG develops flexible systems of materials to aid the direct assistance process that are consistent in format, but made up of separate items dealing with specific topics of concern to RTAs at various points in the assistance process.

D-14. The TAG uses research and evaluation results to legitimate its approach with RTAs and funders.

D-15. If the TAG collects research data, it is focused on providing useful information about program process as well as results.

D-16. The TAG employs effective formats for feeding back to its staff and RTAs any research information it collects, beyond merely distributing written reports or briefly discussing research findings.

D-17. If conflict tactics are used, the TAG uses them in a focused way and projects an alternative idea of what education could be as well as opposing present practices.

D-18. The TAG makes those subsystems of school community functioning that they most want to change the focus of detailed plans for improvement, detailed strategy and tactics, and a significant percentage of facilitator effort.

E. Carrying out specific assistance efforts (ASSISTANCE).

E-1. The TAG builds on strengths and minimizes the weaknesses of its relation to RTA's on the internal-external dimension.

E-2. The TAG develops strategies appropriate to its geographical relationship with respect to RTAs.

E-3. The TAG develops a facilitator role that supports the mutual adaptation of TAG strategy, facilitator characteristics, and setting characteristics.

E-4. The TAG identifies facilitators with appropriate philosophy, racial or ethnic background, experience, and ability to cope with the stresses of the facilitator role.

E.5. Facilitators constantly clarify their role with members of the school community.

E-6. Facilitators consider effects of the entry process on all major actors and subgroups within the school community before and during the entry process.

E-7. TAG and facilitators establish credibility with RTA's by building on the RTA's personal identification with the facilitator; the TAG's legitimacy through recommendations of persons respected by the RTA; the TAG's ability to demonstrate that the facilitators can be of concrete practical help; the TAG's ability to demonstrate that their approach is a comprehensive one; the TAG's ability

to establish that a major priority for them is to help the RTA, as opposed to some hidden agenda; and additional tactics appropriate to the individual TAG approaches.

E-8. Facilitators gather extensive knowledge about the history of the school community early in the entry process.

E-9. Facilitators consciously control the formats for interaction with RTA's (e.g. group meeting vs. individual interview) during the entry process.

E-10. The facilitator effectively communicates in the entry process the nature of the TAG's strategy, the values it involves, and limits on the nature and amount of assistance available.

E-11. The TAG obtains specific commitments during the entry process for the RTA's responsibilities in the assistance process.

E-12. The TAG makes realistic assessments of the match between its capabilities and the characteristics of the RTA before making a commitment to provide assistance.

E-14. The TAG develops strategies in light of the central position of the school principal in almost any change process.

E-15. The TAG seeks to develop a critical mass of support so that its efforts lead to changes in norms, roles, and subsystems rather than in individuals.

E-16. The TAG seeks to develop a permanent network for the support of local facilitators.

E-17. The TAG uses a comprehensive strategy employing the following major types of techniques: structured experiences, over-the-shoulder assistance, and modeling and provision of materials.

E-18. The TAG minimizes those instances in which it intervenes independently to do things for the RTA without RTA involvement.

E-19. The TAG strongly emphasizes concrete assistance

on immediate problems as a major aspect of its assistance efforts.

E-20. The TAG employs formats for assistance that combine communication of substantive information with the use of group process techniques.

E-21. The TAG develops and refines sophisticated formats for structured experiences that train RTA's in the most central aspects of the TAG's approach.

E-22. The TAG makes RTAs conscious that they are acquiring new skills and making progress toward desired goals.

E-23. The TAG employs techniques refined through TAG experience in assessing the needs and readiness of RTAs.

E-24. The TAG actively involves RTAs in all aspects of needs assessment.

E-25. The TAG helps RTAs legitimate their needs for decision-makers by using the results of formal needs assessments.

E-26. The TAG has built into its approach mechanisms that allow it to be responsive to local needs and conditions.

E-27. The TAG hires facilitators and carries out analytical procedures that allow it to be sensitive to local school and commun ty culture and to make appropriate adjustments. This includes adjustments to the constraints of local situations.

E-28. The TAG develops strategies for minimizing the impact of major crises that are beyond the control of the school community, such as teacher transfers and budgets cuts.

E-29. The TAG and RTA become increasingly competent in predicting the effect of their actions on all segments of the school community and on important aspects of its environment.

E-30. The facilitators develop personal relationships with RTA's, but do not allow personal obligations

to pressure them into violating key limits of the facilitator role.

E-31. The TAG develops effective means for documenting and communicating TAG and RTA accomplishments for both internal and external audiences.

E-32. The TAG consistently emphasizes the needs for independent action by the RTA.

E-33. The TAG has a strong skill development and training orientation in its work with the RTA.

E-34. The TAG focuses on central rather than peripheral aspects of school community functioning in its change effort.

E-35. The TAG helps RTAs build a network of support within the school hierarchy and in the broader community.

E-36. The TAG helps the RTA themselves become trainers of other members of the school community.

E-37. The TAG helps the RTA to internalize a cycle of analysis and action.

E-38. The TAG helps the RTA obtain significant financing for change efforts from the local school system at as early a stage as possible.

E-39. The TAG develops broad-based leadership among RTA's.

E-40. The TAG employs mechanisms that sustain the feeling that RTAs are part of a larger social or educational movement.

E-41. The TAG helps RTAs internalize a standard for what it means to carry out the TAG's approach effectively.

E-42. The TAG develops mechanisms of support and collaboration among peers on school staffs.

E-43. The TAG analyzes the school as an integral part of a larger community.

E-44. In working with parents, the TAG helps them develop confidence to press for their own ideas

on an equal basis with school staff, develop detailed knowledge of the functioning of the school, and develop knowledge of the rights of parents and children.

E-45. In working with parents, the TAG creates a variety of channels for involvement in the school.

E-46. In working with parents, the TAG encourages parents to develop a regular presence in the school that comes to be expected and accepted by school staff.

E-47. In working with parents, the TAG helps them develop mechanisms for sustaining parent involvement on a regular non-crisis-oriented basis.